

FARRINGTON HALL  
Aldrich Mining Community-  
Birmingham Industrial District  
Shelby County Road 203  
Aldrich  
Shelby County  
Alabama

HAER No. AL-127

HAER  
ALA  
59-ALDR,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO  
FARRINGTON HALL  
Birmingham Industrial District-  
Aldrich Mine Community  
Shelby County Road ~~42~~ 203  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
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ADDENDUM TO  
FARRINGTON HALL

HAER No. AL-127

Location: Shelby County Road 203, Aldrich, Shelby County,  
Alabama.

Date of  
Construction: 1908

Builder/Architect/  
Engineer: William F. Aldrich

Project  
Information: This report is based upon written documentation  
donated by the Birmingham Historical Society,  
reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

Description: This two-story brick structure with gambrel roof  
features a full-basement, gabled entrance and  
central chimney. The roof overhang is supported by  
decorative scrolled iron brackets. The structure  
employs structural steel and concrete. Steel beams  
in the interior ceilings were covered with walnut  
board. Italian artist Monetta hand painted murals  
depicting the phases of a man's life in realistic  
landscapes around the entire wall of the main room,  
which also features leather wainscoting. The  
construction budget was rumored to be \$40,000. Two  
original cast iron light fixtures and decorative  
iron work inset in the gable ends at second story  
remain. The structure faced the mining camp's  
superintendent's residence, Rajah Lodge, which is  
no longer standing. It currently serves as a  
private residence.

HAER  
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## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Farrington Hall was built as a library, office building and club house for William F. Aldrich's personal use. The basement was designed to allow Aldrich's mechanically-minded 18-year-old son Farrington to work on then-newly-invented automobiles. In 1908, Farrington attempting to clean one of the coal mine reservoirs, developed typhoid fever and died just as the building was being completed. It is named for him.

For many years Farrington Hall, called "Check Office," was used as offices for the Montevallo Coal Mining Company, with company doctors Dr. F. B. Givhan and Dr. L. C. Parnell seeing patients in the basement.

Farrington Hall brick entrance gates and a gardener's residence are the only surviving structures on the former "Rajah Lodge" estate, an 1890 multi-turreted 30-room frame residence surrounded by gardens, fish pools and walks designed by a German landscape architect brought from the botanical gardens in Washington D. C. The Aldrich family name was spelled out on a bank alongside the driveway leading to the carriage house. Area residents considered the private grounds and the conservatories among the most magnificent private gardens in the South.

Builder of Farrington Hall and the Rajah Lodge and gardens was William F. Aldrich, (1853-1920), a New York born civil engineer who came to Alabama in 1874. In 1882 with others, he formed the Montevallo Coal and Transportation Company and personally superintended the building and conduct of the mines and community of Aldrich, which according to one source, became a "model of order, quiet peacefulness and cleanliness." Lawlessness was not a problem as Mr. Aldrich would dismiss any person of questionable character. In 1889, Aldrich married Josephine Cables (1843-1917) of Rochester, New York. In 1912, the Aldrichs moved to Birmingham. Their residence, later a boarding house for workmen at the mine, was demolished in 1947. (Emfinger 1970, 11-45)

## Sources Consulted

Meroney, Eloise, Montevallo: The First One Hundred Years, 1977, p. 47

Emfinger, Henry A., The Story of My Hometown, Aldrich, Alabama, 1970, pp. 11-45

Site Visit with Henry Emfinger, 2/9/92